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REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE PROMOTION AND STRENGTHENING OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES

Collaboration and synergies among Rio conventions for the implementation of the UNCCD

Note by the secretariat

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* ICCD/COP(4)/1.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Secretary of the UNCCD was requested by decision 17/COP.3, to report on the implementation of that decision to the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 4). He was also requested, *inter alia*:

(a) To further enhance the collaboration between the UNCCD secretariat and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), while fully integrating the Global Mechanism;

(b) To continue to take steps to implement the memoranda of understanding (MOU), signed with other secretariats and institutions, and to develop similar MOU with other institutional partners;

(c) To continue his consultations with the executive secretaries of other relevant conventions, particularly the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, on arrangements for liaison modalities at the Headquarters of the United Nations, with which they are institutionally linked, or with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and/or any other relevant location;

(d) To cooperate with UNEP and the executive secretaries of other relevant conventions, particularly the UNFCCC, the CBD and the Ramsar Convention to facilitate the exchange of scientific and technical information and experience in order to enhance the linkages among various scientific bodies and promote efficiency in the reporting requirements of Parties under relevant conventions;

(e) To give special attention at the next Conference of the Parties to the CBD, and the UNFCCC, which have respectively on their agendas a proposal for a work programme on dryland biodiversity and a discussion on issues related to land-use, land-use change and forestry.

2. Accordingly, further ways are not suggested herein to enhance cooperation at the programmatic level between conventions signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio Conference) or as a result of it, or other conventions related to sustainable development and relevant to the global effort to combat desertification. Previous documents prepared under this agenda item for the first, second and third sessions of the Conference of the Parties fully covered the need and grounds for coordination in the different post-Rio implementation processes and described the rationale behind exploring further existing synergies between the UNCCD and other relevant conventions, in particular, the CBD, the UNFCCC and the Ramsar Convention. The scientific and technical linkages between these three conventions were reviewed extensively as were the benefits to be accrued from the implementation of the UNCCD through synergistic approaches with the other sustainable development conventions, by presenting the different scenarios, suggesting viable strategies and identifying different implications to the other conventions, while demonstrating the clear convergence of the objectives of the UNCCD with the other conventions.

II. COLLABORATION AND STRENGTHENING OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CONVENTIONS AND RELEVANT INSTITUTIONS

A. Collaboration with other conventions

1. Convention on Biological Diversity

3. At its fourth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted decision IV/16, annex II, and decided that "Dryland, Mediterranean, Arid, Semi-arid, Grassland and Savannah Ecosystems"

would be one item for in-depth consideration at its fifth meeting. Accordingly, and in conformity with the programme of work of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, the fourth meeting of its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technological and Technical Advice (SBSTTA) examined the first version of the document prepared by the secretariat of the CBD under the COP 5 agenda item "Programme of Work for Dryland, Mediterranean, Arid, Semi-arid, Grassland and Savannah Biological Diversity". As a follow-up to that document, SBSTTA adopted decision IV/3 requesting the CBD secretariat to prepare, in collaboration with the secretariat of the UNCCD, a draft programme of work on Biological Diversity of Dryland, Mediterranean, Arid, Semi-arid, Grassland and Savannah Ecosystems. The same decision also requested the Executive Secretary of the CBD to propose a shorter compound name for the title of this work programme to cover all types of ecosystem referred to therein.

4. During the inter-sessional period between SBSTTA IV and SBSTTA V, the UNCCD secretariat worked in close cooperation with the secretariat of the CBD in the preparation of this programme of work, particularly by providing input and conveying its views to the liaison group set up for that purpose. This consultation process led to the elaboration of a proposed programme of work (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/5/9).

5. The fifth meeting of SBSTTA addressed the issue under its agenda item 4.1.2, on the thematic area of "Biological Diversity of Dryland, Mediterranean, Arid, Semi-arid, Grassland and Savannah Ecosystems: Options for the Development of a Programme of Work". After reviewing the proposed programme of work, SBSTTA adopted a decision requesting the Conference of the Parties to the CBD to adopt a programme of work on this thematic area, to be developed jointly by the CBD and UNCCD secretariats.

6. During the fifth meeting of the SBSTTA, the UNCCD and the CBD secretariats jointly organized a workshop-brainstorming session with delegations, to deliberate further on this issue, particularly concerning their perception and views of this joint work programme. The level of attendance at that session was very encouraging, and participants were able to exchange views regarding their expectations of the programme and invited the UNCCD and CBD secretariats to share their ideas on the approach to be developed. Emphasis was put on field-level coordination of activities for effective implementation of the programme, and the NAP frameworks were considered as important entry points for the success of activities at the country level. The participants expressed a wish to see the development of synergies at the local level and the elimination of the duplication of effort among the various actors involved in implementation.

7. Consultations on the development of the joint work programme for presentation to the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD started almost immediately after the completion of the fifth meeting of SBSTTA, and a text on "Possible Elements for a Joint Work Programme Between the CBD and UNCCD secretariats on Biological Diversity of Dry and Sub-humid Lands", was finalized by the UNCCD and CBD secretariats. Subsequently, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD at its fifth session, established by decision V/23, a programme of work on the Biological Diversity of Dryland, Mediterranean, Arid, Semi-arid, Grassland and Savannah Ecosystems, which may also be known as the programme on the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands".

8. The rationale for the development and implementation of a joint work programme addressing the biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands is based on a number of factors, *inter alia*, that the biodiversity of these land areas constitutes important biological resources that are essential for the development of those areas, and whose conservation and sustainable use is imperative; the biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands is threatened by, among other things, desertification and drought, which in essence prevents rehabilitation of biodiversity, whereas the loss of biodiversity in the dryland areas indirectly brings about desertification. The conservation and sustainable

use of the biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands can lead to achieving the objectives of the environmental conventions, including the CBD and the UNCCD, while still providing tangible benefits to local populations.

9. Moreover, overall erosion and loss of biodiversity in dry and sub-humid areas impacts negatively on the socio-economic conditions of the affected populations, and an integrated approach is necessary is implementing this programme. Also, assessments are necessary to quantify the impact of land degradation and loss of productivity of the dry and sub-humid lands, and the associated loss of biodiversity. The people living in dry and sub-humid land areas depend on the biological diversity for their livelihood, and therefore any threat to these resources tends to undermine the basis of their existence, as they become more vulnerable to drought.

10. It is imperative not only that sustainable livelihood systems should be encouraged in these areas, but also that alternative ones should be developed, bearing in mind that for those countries that are affected by drought and desertification, the effective implementation of both the CBD and UNCCD presents a challenge and an opportunity, particularly in ensuring that available resources are used in an efficient manner, without duplication of effort.

11. Considering that anthropogenic factors that threaten biodiversity are associated with the way people make use of the natural resources to meet their needs, these assessments will take into account the livelihood systems of the inhabitants of the dry and sub-humid lands who depend on the biodiversity as a means of livelihood. This is also in view of the fact that coordination of implementation of the environmental conventions is essential at the local level, where it is possible to make a significant difference and where tangible benefits are not only easily achievable, but also demosstrable. Moreover, development plans for local areas do give added value to any synergistic initiative within the broad context of poverty alleviation.

12. Through the joint work programme, the secretariats of CBD and UNCCD will encourage and support the strengthening, enactment and coordination of policies and instruments that will promote the development of synergistic and complementary approaches in the implementation of the environmental conventions at the country level, through *inter alia* demonstrable cases of convergence of objectives. The CBD and UNCCD will also encourage and support the development of policies that promote participatory decision-making practices, as well as the best mix of scientific and traditional knowledge, in the sustainable and multiple use of biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands, as well as the diversification of means of production. This may include the preparation of methodological tools to facilitate the programming of synergistic initiatives at the local level.

13. Consultations are also going on with regard to the work undertaken by the UNCCD and the CBD secretariat to avoid duplication and to underline the similarity on the subject of traditional and local knowledge know-how and practices.

14. Finally, as agreed upon in the UNCCD-CBD Memorandum of Understanding, the UNCCD and CBD secretariats have continued their consultations regarding the organization of a joint workshop conceived for assisting countries in identifying viable and efficient means for addressing issues of awareness raising, public education, information requirements, training and implementation mechanisms jointly for the two conventions.

15. Both secretariats share the view that these workshops should be designed as national forums for debate and exchange of information on experience gained and progress achieved in the processes envisaged under the two conventions. As such, they could constitute the starting point of a national awareness of the importance of harmonizing and better coordinating the implementation strategies

for the UNFCCC and the CBD. The ultimate goal of such national consultative mechanisms would be the design of an integrated joint implementation strategy for both conventions, taking full advantage of the synergies offered by the UNCCD and the CBD in this regard.

16. Accordingly the UNCCD and CBD secretariats envisage involving major national stakeholders in the proceedings of these workshops. Priority would be given to the line ministries directly in charge of the implementation of each convention and their respective focal points, but an invitation would also be extended to other relevant public authorities with mandates in strategic fields associated with the implementation process of both conventions, such as training, information and scientific research. In this regard, the active participation of the NGO and media community is seen as indispensable. The UNCCD and CBD secretariats are now studying the modalities of a joint fund-raising campaign for this activity.

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

17. In order to strengthen cooperation with the UNFCCC, as a follow up to the various recommendations made in this regard by the COP and building as well on the programme of work of the UNFCCC as defined by decision 9/COP.4, the secretariats of the UNCCD and UNFCCC have engaged in a round of periodic consultations with a view to better defining areas with potential for immediate collaboration. Given the different nature of both processes as well as the different levels of their implementation, such collaboration has focused at this stage on the exchange of information and joint participation in technical and scientific meetings. In this regard, the UNCCD secretariat participated in the workshop on Impacts of Climate Change, held in Bonn in 1998. On that occasion the UNCCD secretariat made a presentation on impacts of climate change on countries in arid, semi-arid and forested areas and areas liable to forest decay, and countries liable to drought and desertification.

18. The UNCCD secretariat participated in the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), held respectively in June and September 2000. Of particular relevance to the UNCCD were SBSTA agenda items on land use, and land-use change and forestry, as well as items of discussion on the Kyoto Protocol which dealt with the clean development mechanism with respect to land degradation issues. The issue of capacity development, on the agenda of the SBI, was of interest to the UNCCD secretariat. The UNCCD secretariat also attended a workshop on land use, land-use change and forestry in July 2000, which was organized by the UNFCCC in response to a request by SBSTA, to analyse the special report on land use, land-use change and forestry of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In the context of the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol, collaborative ventures between the UNCCD and the UNFCCC will be pursued within the broad context of these issues, taking into account the guidance from the Conference of the Parties.

19. Taking advantage of their co-location and bearing in mind cost efficiency, the UNCCD and UNFCCC secretariats have also been engaged in periodic consultations on the possibility of common administrative services. Accordingly, and following a proposal made by the United Nations Office at Geneva, these secretariats have agreed to work towards a shared facility to provide common administrative services.

20. There are many reasons for this initiative, in particular that both secretariats share a similar background and institutional arrangements, had good experiences with joint services when they were located in Geneva, have similar administrative needs, share the same physical space, and are committed to exploring ways of doing more with fewer financial resources. It is expected that a common facility will serve more efficiently the needs of both secretariats, avoiding duplication of capacities, while encouraging the merging of both secretariats.

21. Having agreed on the principle of such a joint facility, the Executive Secretary of each organization has appointed senior staff to work out the modalities and the sequencing of such an operation. The Executive Secretary of the UNCCD will report back to the COP on the development of this initiative.

3. Convention on Wetlands

22. The secretariat has been exploring possibilities of further cooperation with the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), pursuant to the terms of the Memorandum of Cooperation already signed by both secretariats. A consultative meeting was held between the two secretariats in August 2000, with a view to identifying appropriate opportunities to reinforce closer collaboration. During this meeting, the two secretariats agreed to establish more linkages through their Web sites, which would be useful to their focal points at the country level, and focal points would also be informed as appropriate. It was agreed that consultative forums would be sought at the country level, to ensure, as far as possible, collaboration in the implementation of the two conventions. It was evident from the meeting that a number of wetlands in arid and semi-arid lands have not been designated as such, and preparation of a list or inventory has been deemed necessary. This exercise could be started immediately with an initial focus on Africa. Parties are encouraged to increase the number of designated wetlands, for ease of rational management and use.

23. Capacity strengthening is seen as crucial for the implementation of the conventions, and Parties are encouraged to promote awareness of the importance of wetlands for the UNCCD. Ways and means should be explored for developing suitable materials for outreach to various key constituencies.

24. Both secretariats consider it necessary to encourage joint activities in promoting science and technology, and have agreed that the rosters of experts for the two Conventions should be linked through the Web sites. Sharing of experiences through early warning systems is another key component through which the information already developed by the CST can be tapped for use by the Parties. The experience gained by UNCCD Parties through the CST work on benchmarks and indicators, as well as traditional knowledge, should be shared with the Parties to the Ramsar Convention. With respect to the coordination of programmes of work for the two conventions, Parties and focal points are encouraged to hold consultations, particularly when preparing national reports, and to provide copies of strategies/action programmes or plans on work regarding the two conventions. The two secretariats have agreed to seek ways of closer collaboration in their work in the areas affected by drought and desertification.

B. Collaboration with other relevant institutions

1. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

25. In conformity with decision 23/COP.1 of the Conference of the Parties at its first session, the UNCCD secretariat made the necessary contractual arrangements with UNEP, in order to carry out a survey and evaluation of the relevant existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies willing to become units of the network for support to implement the Convention. Accordingly, the UNCCD secretariat mobilized resources for the implementation of phase I of the survey, the report of which was presented to the Conference of the Parties at its third session.

26. Pursuant to the requirements of decision 13/COP.3, the final report of phase I of the survey as updated by UNEP, together with the Terms of Reference of phase II of the survey, have been sent to the Bureau of the CST and the focal point of the Southern African region, which is the SADC Environment and Lands Management Sector Coordination Unit, for their consideration and comments as appropriate.

27. Other collaborative initiatives with GEF include the Dryland Land Degradation Assessment Project (LADA), which aims to provide basic standardized information and methodological tools for land degradation assessment at national, regional and global levels. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) are also key collaborators in this project. Moreover, the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, which is already in preparation, is a process designed to improve the management of the world's natural and managed ecosystems, by helping to provide policy-relevant scientific information on the condition of ecosystems, and options for appropriate response. A detailed profile of these two initiatives is contained in an information document (ICCD/COP(4)/INF.6), which has been provided by the secretariat.

28. The UNCCD secretariat has also been following closely the proposed Integrated Land and Water Management (ILWM) initiative. It is worthwhile to recall that ILWM was presented during one of the parallel events organized in Recife, during COP 3. The broad objective is to develop an integrated approach to the management of land, water and natural resources for productive sustainable growth. It aims to benefit from the special institutional strengths and comparative advantages of collaborating institutions and agencies working together. The ILWM will also seek to find new ways of linking actions by various implementing agencies through units such as watersheds and/or political unit approaches. The UNCCD secretariat has called for the ILWM to focus on the key problems of areas affected by drought and desertification.

1. The Global Environment Facility (GEF)

29. By its decision 14/COP.1, the Conference of the Parties welcomed the excellent cooperation existing between the UNCCD secretariat and the secretariat of the GEF, as well as the reciprocal representation in meetings of the Convention and those of the GEF. At its second session, the COP invited the GEF to actively support the activities of the Global Mechanism, which plays an important role in facilitating the mobilization of resources to support the implementation of the UNCCD (decision 18/COP.2). Furthermore, the First GEF Assembly, held in New Delhi, India in April 1998, adopted the New Delhi Statement, which in paragraph 8 called on the GEF, in consultation with the secretariat of the UNCCD, to seek to better define the linkages between land degradation, particularly desertification and deforestation, and its focal areas and to increase GEF support for land degradation activities as they relate to the GEF focal areas.

30. In response to policy guidance given by the COP and the GEF Assembly and Council, both the UNCCD secretariat and the GEF secretariat have initiated consultations to promote collaborative activities. This document supplements the report submitted to the Conference of the Parties at its second session and presents an updated overview of relations between the UNCCD and the GEF.

31. In this context, the agenda of the GEF Council Meeting that was held in Washington D.C. in December 1999 embodied two items of direct relevance to the UNCCD: that is agenda item 7 on Clarifying Linkages between Land Degradation and the GEF Focal Areas and agenda item 13 on Relations with Conventions.

32. Under agenda Item 7 the GEF secretariat introduced a document entitled "Clarifying Linkages between Land Degradation and the GEF Focal Areas: An Action Plan for Enhancing GEF Support". This document had been prepared by the GEF secretariat with inputs from UNCCD, and it had also been presented by the GEF secretariat at a workshop during the COP 3 in Recife. The document contains an action plan and timetable for implementation, aimed at increasing GEF support for land degradation issues. This document received overwhelming support from the Council members. Accordingly, the Council requested the implementing agencies of the GEF to give high priority to the implementation of this action

plan and called upon them to work cooperatively with the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD.

35. In the same context the Council requested the implementing agencies to enhance their efforts to develop and implement the Integrated Land and Water Initiative, with special emphasis on countries with low vegetative cover, vulnerable to land degradation, and in particular countries in Africa. The Council suggested that aspects of development and poverty alleviation be more clearly articulated in the action plan, which would serve to better recognize co-funding and complementary GEF activities with the regular activities of the implementing agencies. It was also suggested that stronger consideration be given in the action plan and in its implementation to the underlying causes of land degradation.

36. In the light of this development the Council requested the GEF secretariat and the implementing agencies to help countries prepare project proposals in the GEF focal areas that include land degradation measures consistent with the action plan. The Council also requested the GEF secretariat, in cooperation with the implementing agencies, to report regularly on the implementation of the action plan at each Council meeting. The Chief Executive Officer of the GEF promised to table the Action Plan to the next meeting of heads of implementing agencies, with a view to obtaining an early start to the process of the implementation of the Action Plan. It is expected that implementation of the Action Plan will further strengthen UNCCD and GEF collaboration making use of the already established UNCCD national action programme frameworks.

37. Regarding agenda item 10 on Relations with Thematic Fund, the GEF Council encouraged the GEF secretariat and the implementing agencies to continue close collaboration with Parties to the Convention and Convention secretariats. In the same decision, the Council encouraged recipient countries, the implementing agencies and the GEF secretariat to continue their efforts to develop country-driven projects consistent with the priorities and programme strategies identified in the guidance from the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

38. Further potential for collaboration between the GEF and the UNCCD secretariats will be explored through the Capacity Development Initiative (CDI), which is a strategic partnership between the GEF secretariat and UNDP, and the UNCCD secretariat has been invited to be on the Steering Committee. The objective of the CDI is to prepare a strategic action plan to address country level capacity needs, specifically in the climate change and biodiversity focal areas, and land degradation in the context of these areas. The guiding principle of the CDI is to develop the plan through a fully consultative process with the partner countries, mobilizing local and regional expertise, responsive to country needs and priorities.

39. Another area concerns the proposed country Dialogue Workshops, to be run by the GEF and the UNDP. These workshops are expected, among others, to train country-level operatives on how to prepare projects in the format acceptable to the GEF. Indeed, it has been observed that, in spite of the numerous studies and communications that have clearly elucidated the interlinkages that exist between land degradation and the focal areas of the GEF, UNCCD stakeholders still have difficulty in obtaining GEF resources to finance activities initiated in the UNCCD process. This arises from, inter alia, the problems of clearly defining the terms "interlinkages", "incremental cost" and "global benefits", with respect to desertification and land degradation control activities, as reflected by GEF criteria for project formulation and funding.

40. Interventions at the local level in areas affected by land degradation should be rapid and should take approaches that are more innovative than the

taken usually taken by the GEF and the implementing agencies in order to address the underlying causes of land degradation.

58. The proposed Action Plan should include an enabling environment that should be supported and enhanced, but the enabling environment needs not translate into a new conditionality by the GEF, for channelling resources to land degradation activities. Indeed this enabling environment for the action plan should constitute an important entry point to support the poverty alleviation portfolio of the GEF.

C. World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

59. Building on a long tradition of cooperation, the UNCCD secretariat and the WMO have developed numerous joint activities. In this context, the last Congress of the WMO gave a high priority to the UNCCD process and pledged additional financial and technical assistance to support UNCCD related activities that fall into its field of competence, such as early warnings, hydrology, climate variation and drought. A list of main activities in this domain prepared and that have been produced jointly by the UNCCD secretariat and the WMO.

60. Furthermore, the WMO participates in the funding of the first and second phases of the transboundary pilot projects for Asia, under development. The UNCCD secretariat and the WMO are also jointly organizing an international symposium on the El Niño phenomenon to be held in Paris later this year. The WMO has also announced its support to the UNCCD thematic programme networks, particularly the network on the integrated management of international rivers, lakes and hydrometeorological issues in Africa, as well as other issues in Latin America and Caribbean region. The WMO is also assisting the UNCCD secretariat regarding the living standards in drylands for their project in the Sahelian region on poverty preservation and desertification, in connection with the Rio+5 Summit.

D. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

61. The UNCCD recognizes the importance of sensitization, education and public awareness in efforts to combat desertification. In this context, environmental education programmes on the causes and effects of desertification and on techniques to maintain land degradation are one of the main instruments to combat desertification. Therefore, the UNCCD secretariat proposes to cooperate with the UNESCO in order to define a joint programme of cooperation services or activities that would maximize the cooperative potential of UNESCO in the implementation of the Convention. Accordingly the UNCCD secretariat and UNESCO agreed to develop, at the primary school level, educational "desertification kits" in three languages (English, French, Spanish), which will be tested in various drought and desertification affected countries. The first phase of this project will be conducted in the African region with a view to expanding it in the future to other regions covered by the Convention.

62. The educational kits will comprise a youth guide, several fact sheets and two comics booklets highlighting the problems of desertification. UNESCO and the UNCCD secretariat will collaborate in the implementation of the project.

III. INSTITUTIONAL AND LOGISTICAL ASPECTS

A. Status of the signing of memoranda of understanding

63. The Executive Secretary of the UNCCD was requested by the COP, decision 17/COP.1, to continue taking steps to implement the Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) signed with other secretariats and institutions, and to develop similar MOUs with other institutional partners. As reported previously, the UNCCD secretariat has engaged in numerous consultations with a variety of institutional partners with the view to agreeing upon and signing memoranda of

understanding and memoranda of cooperation (MOCs). These documents are conceived as being frameworks that describe in general terms the intended scope of cooperation, building on the diverse fields of expertise and comparative advantages of the different institutional partners available for the implementation of the Convention.

41. In this context, the secretariat has already signed such MOCs with the secretariats of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar) and the CBD. The secretariat has also signed an MOC with FAO, and a Memorandum of Cooperation with UNEP is pending. During the third session of the Conference of the Parties, the UNCCD secretariat has also arranged consultations with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change with a view to developing a Memorandum of Understanding that will identify priority areas of cooperation. These consultations have also included considerations pertaining to the scope and nature of the MOU so as to determine its final structure. Areas of cooperation envisaged would include, among others, joint activities at the national level; data and information management; training issues and national communications. In the light of the latest developments in the field of common administrative services, this MOU will also include a provision relating to this future facility.

42. The UNCCD secretariat has also entered and signed, with the UNDP, a cooperation framework for the implementation of the Convention. In this regard, the UNCCD secretariat is engaged in consultations with UNEP, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the GEF secretariat for the finalization of additional MOUs. Copies of these Memoranda of Understanding and Memoranda of Cooperation are available at the UNCCD secretariat and can be provided upon request.

B. Considerations regarding liaison mechanisms

43. By decision 17/COP.3, the Executive Secretary has requested the secretariat, in consultation with the executive secretaries of other relevant conventions, particularly the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention, to explore suitable liaison modalities at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York, Geneva and other relevant locations.

44. Developing an analysis of possible future requirements, options in liaison modalities, and providing up-to-date recommendations for the Conference of the Parties, in 1999 the secretariat of the UNCCD began consultations with institutional partners with a view to exploring viable options for joint liaison facilities, particularly in Geneva and New York.

45. In its decision 17/COP.3 the Conference of the Parties welcomed and requested efforts of convention secretariats, in response to requests from the respective conferences of the parties, to explore, where appropriate, modalities for suitable liaison arrangements in Geneva and/or New York for the purpose of enhancing linkages with delegations and organizations at those duty stations".

46. Further information on possible liaison arrangements (United Nations centres) is given in ICCD/COP(3)/15/Add.1. With regard to these arrangements, the secretariat informed the Conference of the Parties that consultations with relevant secretariats were being held to explore the possibility of developing liaison capacities in New York, Geneva and Rome. Such liaison capacity would enable Parties that so prefer to continue to cover the Convention from their New York or Geneva missions and would also facilitate interaction between the secretariat and programmes and activities related to combating desertification based in New York, Geneva or Rome.

51. It would also provide liaison with the United Nations Office at Geneva, from which the Convention will continue to receive services in 2000, in particular for administrative matters as well as for the translation, reproduction and distribution of COP documents, and other conference services. In this regard, the Executive Secretary informed the Conference of the Parties of arrangements being made for the maintenance of such liaison through cooperative arrangements with other United Nations offices and partner organizations.

52. Within this policy framework, the UNCCD secretariat continued its consultations with institutional partners, particularly secretariats of similar conventions, with a view to agreeing on suitable modalities for joint liaison facilities. Accordingly, the UNCCD secretariat and the CBD secretariat developed and signed a Memorandum of Understanding in which they agreed on the interest of sharing a common liaison facility in New York for the purpose of enhancing linkages with both processes as well as to maintain closer links with Delegations at Headquarters. Logistical and financial aspects are defined in an annex to the Memorandum of Understanding. The executive secretaries of the UNCCD and CBD secretariats are continuing their consultations in this regard with the objective of extending the scope of the proposed liaison facility to other interested partners and securing the financial resources required for its operation. The UNFCCC secretariat has also expressed interest in office space in New York and is ready to explore with the UNCCD secretariat the practical modalities that may be available in this regard.

53. The UNCCD secretariat has also engaged in consultations with the United Nations Secretariat, through its Department for Economic and Social Development (UNDESA), and UNDP regarding the issue of liaison arrangements in New York. These consultations have been very fruitful. UNDESA has confirmed its willingness to put at the disposal of the secretariat two permanent offices in addition to an office on a part-time basis to be shared by the executive secretaries of the UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD when on mission to New York. These facilities would greatly strengthen the secretariat's capacity to interact with missions based in New York, particularly developing and least developed country missions, as well as with the United Nations Headquarters, with which the UNCCD is administratively linked, while also promoting cost efficiency in the operations of the secretariat.

54. It is also expected that the existence of this facility will allow for substantial savings due to the fact that the travel of secretariat staff will be reduced to a minimum and the costs of communications will be less. No additional costs are foreseen at this stage regarding staff as the secretariat is further exploring options available under the agreement with the Secretary-General on the use of overhead resources.

55. Following the relocation of embassies from Bonn to Berlin, the secretariats of the conventions based in Bonn feel a strong need to reach Parties through their permanent missions at United Nations Headquarters. Many actors involved in the UNCCD process are based in New York, which remains the main forum for high level and technical debate on matters of direct importance to the UNCCD. For example, the main chapter of the G77 (more than 75 per cent of the Parties) is based in New York; the annual sessions of the General Assembly, which considers issues of relevance to the UNCCD and other Rio conventions are held there; three out of five United Nations programmes are based in New York and have work related to the UNCCD, in particular the United Nations Development Programme, and the Administrative Committee on Coordination holds most of its meetings at United Nations Headquarters.

56. In view of the above, the Conference of the Parties may wish, as an interim measure, to authorize the Executive Secretary to set up a liaison facility at United Nations Headquarters. This facility should be run by no more than one Professional staff member. The Executive Secretary should report to the

fifth session of the Conference of the Parties on experience and benefits gained. From that experience, liaison facilities may be extended to other places as required/or appropriate with the understanding that no additional financial resources will be incurred for this purpose. It is assumed that the staff member in New York will be paid from the portion of the overhead that the United Nations secretariat returns to the Convention secretariat in accordance with the institutional arrangements between them.

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